Class Rank

The high school class rank system has a lot of influence on the lives of students. The class rank system is a system that compares student’s GPA’s to others in their class. There is a major controversy in many of the schools boards across America about whether or not this system is appropriate for judging students. I believe that the class ranking system is not a proper way to compare students to one another. This system is inaccurate and must be abolished or replaced.

I have had personal experiences in this topic. Many colleges use this class rank system to determine who gets scholarships. The colleges usually offer the largest scholarships to the valedictorian and then usually give less to people who have a higher ranking number. This process is unfair due to the fact that usually the top few kids of a class are nearly equal in ability and grades. Usually the number one kid is only number one by fractions off a percent. My sister has been affected by this class ranking system. She had at one point been ranked number one in her class. She had been offered many scholarships to many colleges, some of which were full tuition scholarships. Just recently she had lost her valedictorian status and is now the salutatorian. However, her GPA is lower than the new number one by one thousandth of a point. Due to this drop in rank her scholarship offers were cut in half. She and the valedictorian are equal in ability and skill yet the one who is slightly better is rewarded while the loser gets half.

The class rank system is promoting unhealthy competition. Around the country top students must fight brutally with their fellow classmen just to make the top 10 percent of the class. This lifestyle is not good for a growing teenager. Students should be taught to work together to become successful, not compete and cause drama. “So many friendships are destroyed through this process. Once, I learned that I was No. 2 and my friend was [behind me]. Once she learned that, she cut ties with me completely. There is no communication. She hates my guts now,” says Weina Scott who was the salutatorian of her class. Also many of the top students may be influences to cheat to get ahead because their lives are so stressful otherwise. I have had fellow friends and classmates that have resorted to cheating because they have not time or mental capacity to do it on their own. Their lives are stressed now that we are arriving at the end of our adolescent lives. We are taking on new responsibilities while having to deal with our class rank. We have been told all our lives to get good grades to get into a good college, but with the current class rank system good grades just don’t cut it. Colleges require us to be better than everyone else if we are to get financial aid.

Academic pressure from systems such as the class rank, within high school is a major cause of stress to adolescence. When these students, who have been pushed by their parents to do their very best, begin to fail this causes a great deal of stress to a developing teenager. According to the latest State of our Nation’s Youth report, 79 percent of teens say the pressure to get good grades is a problem.  That’s up from 62 percent in 2001. 45 percent polled say that pressure is “major”, up from 19 percent. These statistics show that the pressure that is forced upon teenagers is having negative effects and causing anxiety. “The problem is that they will always be anxious. They will always fail. Even when they have a 4-point average they will always fail in their own eyes and they can’t ever relax,” explains Dr. Allen Carter, a psychologist. Class rank does not only promote unhealthy competition but it can lead to anxiety and academic stress.

Colleges take class rank into high consideration when admitting students to their high schools. Grades are not the only important thing to consider in what makes an efficient worker. Students need to have social skills to form relationships in the professional world. Students that must spend the majority of their time studying for their heavy leveled classes have less time to participate in extracurricular activities and social behavior. “It's forming relationships with people. It's social life, having social skills. Staying in your room all day studying because you have eight AP classes every year is not fostering your social skills,” says Weina Scott who has experienced these difficult classes.

I believe that the effort to maintain good grades and a weighted GPA is very difficult while balancing extracurricular activities. I currently am taking two AP classes and two honors courses while running track. I personally think that it is stressful to try and balance my schedule. I cannot imagine how difficult it would be to have an 8 period curriculum with homework from each class. This lack of time after school can have crippling effects on student’s social lives which can in turn damage their social skills that they will need later in life.

There are schools that have successfully used other systems to reward their students for good grades without singling out the top two. The school board at the Miami-Dade school has changed their policy to reward the top five percent with an award and then they reward the top ten and 15 percent with other rewards. They do not base student’s ability off one another. The students admit that they actually like the new system. The students of this high school admitted in an interview that the valedictorian and salutatorian spots were not beneficial. They states that the top two spots broke up friendships and caused stressful and dramatic competition. One of the students even pointed out that the struggle for the top two was actually unproductive and unhealthy.

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